
SWEDISH DRUG MARKETS AND DRUGS POLICY

by

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***Abstract:** This chapter offers an analysis of the consequences of the introduction of a Swedish drug policy in which police actively started targeting street markets in the beginning of the 1980s. The experience in Stockholm is used as an example, and two studies of the intervention against street markets have been examined. Additional survey information is used to consider possible long-range preventive effects of the changed policy.*

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an analysis of the impact of a change in Swedish drug policy made in the early 1980s. Previously, enforcement efforts had concentrated on disruption of supply; the new policy involved demand-reduction brought about by the active disruption by the police of retail drug markets. The chapter focuses on experience in Stockholm. Availability of data and other factors limit the analysis to the period running from the beginning of the 1970s to the early 1990s. The chapter uses two evaluations of operations against street markets as cornerstones in its argument. It draws on additional data from the police and from surveys to consider possible long-range preventive effects of the changed policy. The ultimate question is whether the shift has decreased the level of abuse.

THE EVOLUTION OF DRUG MISUSE IN SWEDEN

Misuse of drugs emerged as a significant social problem in Sweden in the late 1950s. Initially amphetamine was the primary substance misused — a drug still playing a central role in the Swedish drug problem. At that time misuse was regarded as a medical-treatment problem (Olsson, 1984). Efforts were made to make doctors more restrictive when prescribing drugs. For a short period during the 1960s, a program of legal drug prescription was tried. In the wake of the program, use rapidly increased, especially among persons with a criminal background, and the program was soon suspended (Bejerot, 1977; Olsson, 1995). Cannabis was first used by jazz musicians during the 1950s and became popular among young people in the late 60s (Bejerot, 1968). Misuse of opiates was restricted to few drug addicts until the 1970s, when heroin use became more widespread. Cocaine has so far not been considered a significant problem in Sweden. During the last few years use of ecstasy and similar drugs has become established in some youth subcultures. There are clear indications that use of cannabis has increased among school pupils from the mid 1990s (Andersson et al., 1998). The same trend can also be seen among armed forces conscripts (Guttormsson, 1998).

Ever since the rapid spread of drug misuse in the early 1960s, criminality and drugs have been intertwined. In a study of the remand prison of Stockholm (Bejerot, 1975), the proportion of remand prisoners with physical signs of injecting drugs increased from about 20% in 1965 to about 50% in 1972 (Bejerot, 1979). Two studies on persistent offenders in Stockholm — one on household burglars and the other on cheque forgers — showed that about half were drug injectors (Knutsson and Kühlnhorn, 1980; Persson, 1976).

CRIMINAL POLICY ON DRUGS

Sweden saw several changes in drug legislation in the 1960s and 1970s. Swedish legislators regard the stated maximum penalty as an important declaratory signal. In 1965, with the introduction of a new Penal Code, the maximum penalty for drugs offences was reduced from two to one year's imprisonment. However, when a new Narcotic Drugs Acts was enacted in 1968, the maximum penalty for aggravated cases was increased to four years. A year later the maximum penalty was increased again, this time to six years, and only three years later, in 1972, it was increased yet again to ten years. The last two reforms were designed to harmonize Swedish legislation with international standards for drug trafficking penalties.

A period of legislative calm followed until 1981. Then the maximum penalty for aggravated offences committed by repeat offenders was increased to 16 years. In 1985 a further amendment to the legislation was designed to signal the gravity of drugs offences in general. The least serious offence category was upgraded to Petty Offence from Misdemeanor and imprisonment was added to the list of sentencing options. For more serious offences, fines were removed from the sentencing options.

A controversial question has been whether misuse in itself should be considered a crime. Until 1988 it was illegal to produce, distribute, sell and possess drugs, but not to use drugs. In 1988 consumption became a punishable act. The offense was punishable only by fine, and this Swedish legislation severely limited the means by which the police could gather evidence of consumption. The legislation was intended to have a declaratory function, signalling the gravity of illegal drug use. This message was implicitly directed towards young people who might consider experimental use. Finally, in 1993, imprisonment was included as a sentencing option for consumption of drugs, making it possible for the police to collect evidence of use.

Instructions to Prosecutors

In the sphere of drugs, the instructions issued to prosecutors by the Prosecutor General have been very important in shaping prosecutorial — and thus police — practice. The Prosecutor General issued four Letters of Instructions between 1968 and 1972 directing prosecutors to waive prosecution for possession of drugs that were reckoned to be for personal use. The four letters progressively raised the threshold below which quantities should be regarded as for personal use. The 1971 letter included an explicit reference to "Labeling Theory," which was very influential at that time (Knutsson, 1977). It was assumed that novice or experimental users who were diverted from punishment would be spared the fate of being labeled as drug addicts, and that this would reduce the chances that they would be driven into careers as drug misusers.

During the 1970s there was a fierce and highly polarised debate over drugs policy. On the one side were those who looked upon drug addiction primarily as a social problem and favored treatment as the cure. On the other were those who favored a restrictive policy, aiming at reducing demand and availability by strict enforcement. Those favouring treatment dominated in the early 1970s. Their arguments shaped the practice of prosecutors, which in turn discouraged the police from focussing on drug dealing at street level. Towards the end of the 1970s, the second group got the upper hand. This is evident

from instructions given to prosecutors. The Chief Prosecutor in Stockholm, where the problem was most serious, decided in 1977 that waiver of prosecution should not be used for the possession of heroin and cocaine, even for small amounts that were for personal use. Finally in 1980 the Prosecutor General reversed his position, deciding that waiver of prosecution for the possession of drugs should be the exception and not the rule. He issued an instruction that prosecution should be waived only in cases that were obviously minor, such as possession by first offenders of very small amounts. He argued that this would have the effect of decreasing availability of drugs, which would encourage drug addicts to get treatment and, crucially, would decrease the spread of illegal substances. He concluded that only actions targeting the distribution of drugs at retail level would have a significant impact on availability.

The Police

When the police were reorganised in 1965 from a local to a national system, a central drugs unit was created at the National Swedish Police Board. Previously, the main drug-related problems facing the police were burglaries of pharmacies and the forging of prescriptions. With the growth of drug misuse the National Police Board organized a countrywide operation against drug-related crime in 1969. About 750 police took part in the operation. This amounted to a short-term, fivefold increase in numbers of officers engaged in drug policing. However, probably reflecting the prevailing drug policy, the resources allocated to drug work steadily decreased between 1970 and 1975.

The downward trend was reversed in 1976 when county-level drugs units were set up, with a consequent increase in manpower assigned to drug work. This marked the start of a new era with a new preventive strategy. Previously the strategy had been to reduce supply by targeting traffickers and large-scale suppliers. Consumption was defined as a treatment problem, and not a real police issue. Towards the end of the 1970s and at the start of the 1980s the police started to target retail drug markets at street level with the aim of reducing availability and demand for drugs. The change in prosecutorial policy was critical in triggering this shift. Between 1980 and 1983, several centrally planned police operations took place. The drugs units were given even more resources and drug squads were created in some of the larger police forces specifically to target street markets.

DEVELOPMENT OF CONTROL POLICY — A SUMMARY

The development of Swedish drug-control policy can be summarized as falling into in five phases, described in Table 1 (Kühlhorn et al., 1996; but see Kassman, 1998).

Table 1: Characteristics of Control Policy

Period	Characteristics
Phase 1 to 1967	Efforts to decrease supply by control of medical prescription.
Phase 2 1968-1972	Stricter penal control. Increased maximum penalty from 1 year of imprisonment to 10 years. Generous use of waiver of prosecution for possession of illegal substance. Increase in police resources.
Phase 3 1973-1975	Decrease in police resources.
Phase 4 1976-1979	Tougher prosecution policy introduced by the Chief Prosecutor in Stockholm. Renewed increase in police resources.
Phase 5 1980-1992	More serious view on drug offences. Misuse criminalized. Letter from Prosecutor General restricting waiver of prosecution. Large increase in police resources. Police operations targeting street markets.

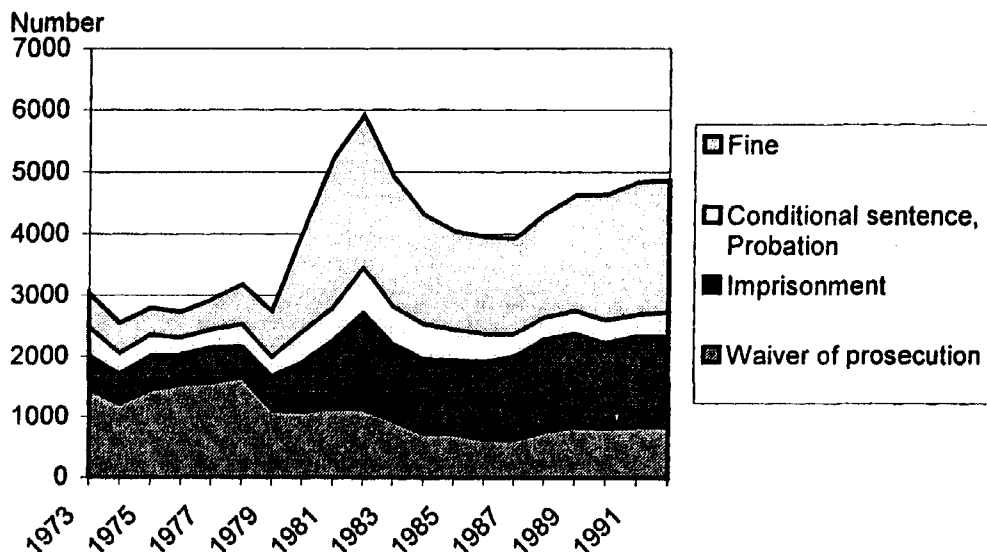
During the four first phases, with a possible exception for the police offensive in 1969, the strategy that dominated policing was supply reduction. It was only during Phase Five that demand reduction predominated. Subsequent developments are in accordance with the strict policy. In 1993 the police bought equipment to test suspects for drug misuse, and in 1996 a special "Rave Squad" was formed to tackle retail drug dealing in that environment.

It is beyond the scope of this work to explain the reasons for this shift in policy. However, it ought to be mentioned that in the late 1970s, there was pressure to change the principles that guided penal policy in general. It was argued that the previously ascendant treatment ideology had failed and that policy would be better guided by principles of general deterrence. The argument was not that treatment was ineffective at an individual level, but that it had the wrong

declaratory effect. It was thought that strategies of general deterrence would serve more clearly to emphasize issues of values (National Council for Crime Prevention, 1979).

Figure 1 shows the impact of these legislative and policy changes on the criminal process. The figure presents statistics from 1973 to 1992 for the whole country. When interpreting the trends, it must be kept in mind that the police have a proactive relationship towards drug offences. To simplify, the number of cases detected and processed through the criminal process is a function primarily of levels of police activity (but see below).

Figure 1: Court Sentences and Waiver of Prosecution for Drug Offences, 1972-1992, Countrywide



The number of cases dealt with more than doubled after the change in policy and the targeting of street markets in the early 1980s. After an initial surge, numbers declined in the mid 1980s, but remained at a considerably higher level than in the 1970s. With respect to variations in type of disposal, waivers of prosecution have decreased both in absolute and relative terms. Before the shift they accounted for about 50% of all cases; by 1992 they had fallen to around 18%. To a large extent fines seem to have replaced waivers of prosecution. Fines increased from just under 20% to about 40% of all

disposals. The harshest punishment — imprisonment — grew from almost a fifth to almost a third of all disposals. The overall growth in numbers of cases processed ultimately reflected the changes in prosecutorial practice, which had a "knock on" effect on policing.'

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The focus in this section is upon the long-term effects of the changes in the drug policy. The "preventive hypothesis" formulated by Kühlnhorn et al. (1996) provides us with a useful starting point. The hypothesis is derived from a synthesis of the conventional theory of individual prevention and the theory of general deterrence.

According to the hypothesis, increased resources resulting in higher risks and stiffer penalties is presumed to limit the spread of the drug trade and the recruitment of new participants, and to reduce the attractiveness of drug use to existing users. Similarly, a decrease in the risks of discovery and punishment is assumed to stimulate the drug market by allowing it greater freedom of operation. Formulated in a more stringent form the hypothesis may be expressed in four propositions:

- (1) Greater police enforcement raises the probability that a larger portion of drug offenders will be detected and identified.
- (2) High risk of detection and threat of serious penalties means that engagement in drug trafficking begins when the individual has much to win and little to lose, i.e. when engagement in criminal activity has gone on for a long time and when the individual's experience of lost quality of life on detection and punishment weighs lightly in relation to the profits of dealing in drugs...
- (3) Sales of drugs becomes concentrated to a network of older persons.
- (4) Use of drugs begins at a later age, only a small number of new addicts are recruited [Kühlnhorn et al., 1998:107].

The situational approach provides us with an alternative theoretical framework. The basic premise is that by manipulating different situational circumstances, people can be induced to abstain from committing illegal acts. One feature of the situational approach is its openness toward ideas of the causal processes leading to criminal acts. A distinction is made between what causes some persons to become more prone to commit crime — involvement — and circumstances that are related to situations in which the acts occur — the event (Cornish and Clarke, 1985). But there is an assumption within

the situational perspective that thinking about crime has traditionally overemphasized the importance of more distant "dispositional" factors. If true this implies that the scope for effective preventive measures may have been underestimated. In the case of disrupting drug markets there are three potential preventive mechanisms (Clarke, 1997:18):

- *Increasing perceived effort*: Decreased availability will make it harder to get the sought-after drugs, which means that fewer will engage in the process of trying to get drugs.
- *Increasing perceived risks*: One of the primary goals with the changed policy is to increase both the risk of being apprehended and punished.
- *Removing excuses*: By making it clear that even the consumption of drug is a crime, it will be harder to neutralize the behavior.

From both perspectives it may be expected that the new policy would make drug markets more fragmented, less visible and more secluded, and that it will have its greatest impact on young persons. The vulnerability of juveniles is clearly stated in the preventive hypothesis, and it is implicit in the situational perspective that, because of their social situation, young persons are more amenable to situational measures.

THE INTERVENTIONS

This section draws on two evaluation studies: *Deprivation of Freedom and the Police — An Evaluation of the Temporary Custody Act* — (Kiihlhorn, 1976) and "Restoring Public Order in a City Park" (Knutsson, 1997). The first evaluation includes a study of a police operation against drug misusers in Humlegården — a centrally situated park in Stockholm — in the beginning of the 70s. The second study consists of a focused study of an intervention against drug users in another of Stockholm's parks — Vasaparken — about 20 years later. Both studies are concerned with police operations towards street-level drug dealing. As will be clear from the preceding discussion, the operations took place in two very different policy contexts. During the first the "permissive" policy still prevailed; during the second the "restrictive" policy involving systematic police action against retail drug dealing had been in operation for a decade. Both operations can be regarded as "crackdowns." According to Sherman (1990), a crackdown consists of a temporary increase of police activities in a designated area for specific crimes considered to have been previously underenforced. The two studies consist of natural experiments, with all

problems of making conclusions from evaluations with that type of design, which has occurred within a larger natural experiment.

The 1973 Humlegården Operation

The situation in Humlegården that led up to the operation was described by a contemporary observer:

During July in 1972 the uniformed police noticed that in a short period of time, a considerable increase in Humlegården in the number of juveniles who were drunk or high on drugs. Youths gathered in gangs, smoked cannabis and drank beer. A lively market in drugs went on in the area....In the summer of 1973 the groups increased considerably. In the afternoons and evenings, as a rule, hundreds of youth gathered in Humlegården.... There was a serious problem of littering; the park amenities deteriorated, and the general public did not dare or did not want to visit the park, which, according to the police command, had become the center of the illegal drugs trade in Stockholm" [Bejerot et al., 1974:9-10].

According to police and social workers who had contact with drug users in the park, the main drug involved was cannabis, but amphetamine was also sold, with transactions often occurring quite openly.

As the situation in Humlegården failed to improve and complaints from local business and legitimate park users increased, the authorities decided to take action. The police assigned special uniformed patrols to the park. To restore public order, the police command decided to carry through an operation during the summer of 1973. All uniformed personnel from the local precinct took part. On a daily basis, as long as the campaign lasted, a detachment of about 20-30 officers patrolled the park intensively and arrested anyone who committed crimes or behaved in a disorderly way (including an attorney at law and some social workers). The Temporary Custody Act was extensively used. In short, the Act states that: "He who through his activities disturbs the public order or constitutes immediate threat to order, shall be detained by a police officer, if it is necessary for the maintenance of order. Such detention shall occur even when it is needed to ward off a prosecutable offense."

From June to August 1973, at the height of the operation, 1,467 persons were arrested in the park: 63% of these cases involved public-order offences, and 21% drug offences. However, even where arrests were for public order offences, the vast majority of those ar-

rested were drug users — more than 80% according to one study (Bejerot et al., 1974).

During the operation the police used the powers that were then available. The way the Narcotic Drugs Act was practiced at that time, with waiver of prosecution for the possession of illegal drugs as the normal disposal, made it a somewhat unsuitable tool for the police. The typical outcome following arrest was detention in police custody for about two hours, followed by release. Drugs were always confiscated, regardless of the disposal of the case.

The police stopped the operation when they thought that the problem had been resolved, i.e., when the drug users left the park, the drug market had been dismantled and social order reestablished. The drug market, although fragmented, moved to other parts of the inner city. In the light of the data, I would argue that the more a market becomes a well-established market, it will compound the problem by attracting both new buyers and new retail dealers. It is, therefore, wise to use a policy that disrupts and fragments markets.

The police operation gave rise to strong negative reactions from a pressure group representing the interests of drug addicts. It was claimed that the Temporary Custody Act was used in an arbitrary fashion and that the act restricted citizens' liberty. Some newspaper coverage followed in which the evaluation was criticized for being too uncritical towards the act.

The 1990 Vasaparken Operation

The Stockholm Police Force did not get a dedicated street-market unit until 1983. In 1991 the Stockholm County Police Force established a street-market unit covering the whole county. In practice, much of their work was carried out in the city of Stockholm. At the time of the intervention in Vasaparken, the drugs trade at street level was, according to the commander of the street-market unit, concentrated to two places in Stockholm. One was in the Center City Area (mainly Sergels Square) and the other in the park. In the Center City Area, on a daily basis, about 10-30 persons were engaged in drug dealing, mainly amphetamine and heroin.

Systematic observation was part of the evaluation of the police action in Vasaparken. From spring and until autumn of 1990, observers spent about 250 hours in the park. It is not as centrally situated as Humlegården, but is fairly easy to get to by subway. The situation in the park was described in the following way:

Observers noted that the group of drug users was unusually hardy, congregating even in cold and inclement weather.... Their behaviors, such as loud, boisterous talking and public

urination, often intimidated legitimate users, who took pains to avoid passing the group.... The size of the group grew to an average of 15 to 20; sometimes as many as 30 gathered to smoke hashish.... Members engaged in drug sales discretely, with individuals leaving the group temporarily to conduct a transaction with a buyer [Knutsson, 1997:136].

The Swedish version of the report observed that: "Presumptive buyers were not always easy to identify. There were many remarks as to whether a person was a social worker looking for a client, a worried relative or a buyer" (Knutsson, 1995:6). Dealing centred on cannabis. In comparison with Humlegården, transactions were much less open.

At the time of the intervention in Vasaparken, reforms of the Narcotic Drugs Act and the way it was practiced made the act a suitable instrument for the police. To take care of the problem the street-peddling unit was temporarily increased by seven officers, bringing total strength to 18 officers during the spring of 1990. A "stationary method" tactic was employed. This involved covert observation in the park; the observers radioed descriptions of offenders to patrol officers outside the park, who then made arrests. During the operation 154 people were arrested for drug offences in or around the park. The park authorities also embarked on a program of work to assist in the restoration of order, redesigning parts of the park to make it less attractive for drug dealing.

Disposals differed according to the offence for which the person was arrested. The most common punishment was a fine for buyers and for the fewer sellers a short term in jail. Of course, the illegal substances were always confiscated — a consequence intensely disliked by the drug users.

Once the drug users had left the park and the drug market had been dismantled, the crackdown was discontinued. The general public appreciated the restoration of the public order, felt safer more secure, used the park more often and were more satisfied with the police.

The crackdown in Vasaparken seems to have displaced offenders to the inner-city and to other parts of Stockholm. Some offenders were arrested in another park on the outskirts of the city, where they tried to set up a new drug market (Ekenwall and Siipo, 1994). The location of the park, as well as the fact that it was used little by legitimate park users, made this author conclude that a spatial displacement had occurred but that the net effects of this were benign (cf., Eck, 1993; Barr and Pease, 1990).

According to the commander of the street market unit, the attempt to set up a new street market failed. In his opinion, the pres-

sure by the Stockholm police force was so intense that it was a doomed enterprise from the outset.

The evaluation of the Vasaparken operation included an assessment of its perceived legitimacy. Strong support from the public was voiced for the activities of the police. The results of the evaluation were published in two major newspapers and caused no debate.

The Interventions — A Summing Up

It is evident that the street markets were quite different, and, if one accepts the opinion of the police, that retail drug markets had undergone a radical change. In the 1970s the Humlegården one was large scale, geographically focussed and located in the heart of Stockholm. In the 1990s the main street markets were the one in the city center and the Vasaparken one, which was small scale and situated away from the city center. The street market had transformed from a large-scale open market with hundreds of participants to a small and secluded setting. If this is not a result of the activities of the police, it must be argued that there is another reason: for example, the market imploded because of lack of interested customers, and this lack of interest had arisen independent of activities of law enforcement agencies.

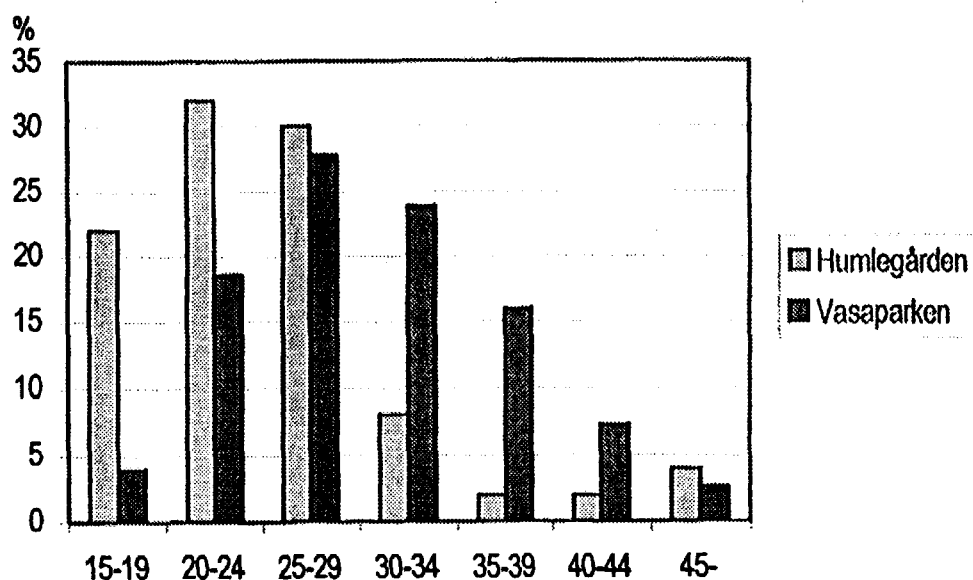
In the theoretical section it was hypothesized that increased efforts to curb street dealing would affect mainly young persons, by limiting their involvement. This notion is supported by data on persons arrested during the actions (Ekenwall and Siipo, 1994; Bejerot et al., 1974). There is a considerable change in age structure, as Figure 2 shows.

More than half of those arrested in Humlegården were under 25. The corresponding figure for Vasaparken was 23%. The average age of those arrested during the crackdown in Humlegården was 26, while in Vasaparken it was 30.

LONG-TERM CHANGES REFLECTED BY POLICE DATA

The discussion so far has been limited to the situation at two points in time. In this section police data will be used to shed light on the long-term development. The data to be examined comprise statistics on police resources, on reported crimes and on suspects.

Figure 2: Age-Structure of Arrested Persons During Crackdown in Humlegården 1974 and Vasaparken 1990



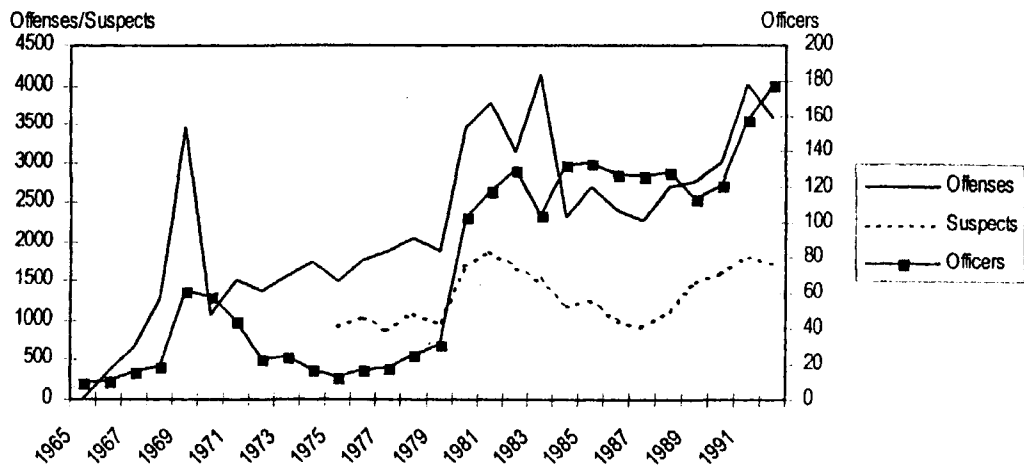
First we need to consider the relationship between police enforcement activity and crime statistics. In a situation with low rates of enforcement there will be relatively few reported crimes. When the police start targeting street markets and enforcement gets more intense, there will initially be an increase in the number of detected offenders and reported crimes. However, the market is likely to adapt to the increased risks, and dealing will be done more discretely, and in less public sites (see Edmunds et al., 1996). This means that it will be harder for the police to detect crimes, and, more to the point, the availability of drugs will decrease for those who do not have any connections with the drug scene. According to the hypotheses, the most vulnerable groups are youths, who will be exposed to a situation with more limited access to drugs. However, those who already have access to the market will continue to buy drugs.

Figure 3 shows trends in police resources allocated to drug work in the County of Stockholm. Increases in police resources reflect the police campaigns: the offensive in 1969 and the street-level operations at the start of the 1980s. The setting up of the street-market units in 1983 and 1991 is also noticeable. Figure 3 also displays the

number of reported drug offences and number of suspects. Statistics on offences and suspects refer to the City of Stockholm alone.

There are three periods with sharp increases in police resources; each of these were accompanied by a growth in recorded drug offences, and, at least from 1975 when data were available, in numbers of suspects. The pattern is in accordance with what might be expected. The curves can be seen as an indication that risk of detection has increased, due to the new policy implemented in the 1980s. To engage in drug trafficking in an open setting in the 1990s was thus a far more risky enterprise than in the 1970s.

Figure 3: Number of Police Officers Assigned to Work with Drug Offences in the County of Stockholm, and Number of Recorded Drug Offences and Suspects in Stockholm, 1965 to 1992 (Suspects 1975-1992)

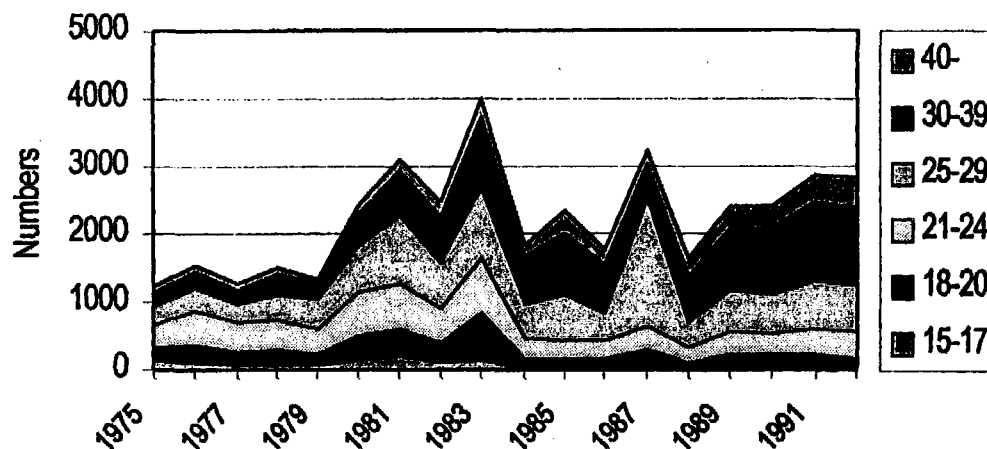


According to the hypotheses, younger persons should become less involved in drug markets as a consequence of the policy shifts. Information on trends in the age structure of suspects supports this notion. Figure 4 shows the annual number of drug offences, broken down by the age of the suspect. Information is available from the mid 1970s onward. There is some double-counting of offenders, since, during an interrogation suspects may have admitted to more than one crime, or may have been arrested more than once a year.

There is a sharp increase following the targeting of street markets in the beginning of the 1980s, followed by a new increase in 1983,

when the street market units were formed. The background to the peak in 1987 for age group 25-29 is unclear. A possible explanation is that an exhaustive investigation of one or more drug dealers resulted in a large number of recorded crimes. This upward trend beginning in the late 1980s may have been due to renewed efforts by the police. Age composition reveals a growth both in absolute and relative terms of persons older than 24 years of age. A similar reduction is apparent for younger persons.

Figure 4: Number of Crimes Committed by Suspects According to Age: Drug Offences, Stockholm, 1975-1992



The three-year averages of numbers and proportions of crimes for drug offences for four age categories are displayed in Table 2. The data cover three periods: the mid 1970s, the early 1980s and the early 1990s. The periods have been selected to represent:

- A time when the police did not put much effort on street markets.
- The time when the police *started* targeting them.
- A time when the police had been targeting street markets for about a decade.

In the first period, those aged under 25 accounted for a considerable proportion of all crimes; altogether about 55%. During the offensive in the beginning of the 1980s, there was a marked increase in absolute numbers. This increase in all likelihood can be attributed to

a larger risk of detection and not an increased level of dealing. But the proportion of crimes decreased for those under 25 to 40%. In the first years of the 1990s, despite even more marked activity by the police, there was a striking reduction both in absolute and relative numbers of younger persons involved in crimes. Together, in the last period, they account for about one fifth of all drug offenses among suspects. The decline is especially notable for those 15 to 17 years of age.

Table 2: Average Number and Proportion (%) of Drug Offences According to Age of Suspects, Stockholm, 1975-1977, 1981-1983 and 1990-1992

	15-17		18-20		21-24		25 and older		Total	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
1975-77	102	7.6	218	16.2	429	31.8	598	44.4	1,347	100.0
1981-83	145	4.5	456	14.3	660	20.7	1,926	60.4	3,187	100.0
1990-92	43	1.6	163	6.1	357	13.2	2,132	79.1	2,695	100.0

The pattern is what one would expect if there was a preventive effect. During the first period there were relatively few reported juveniles (and adults) when the risk of detection was low. Increases for all categories of age occurred during the second period as a result of a higher risk of detection, followed by a decrease of juveniles during the third period. In this chain of events, the reduction is an assumed result of the preventive effect.

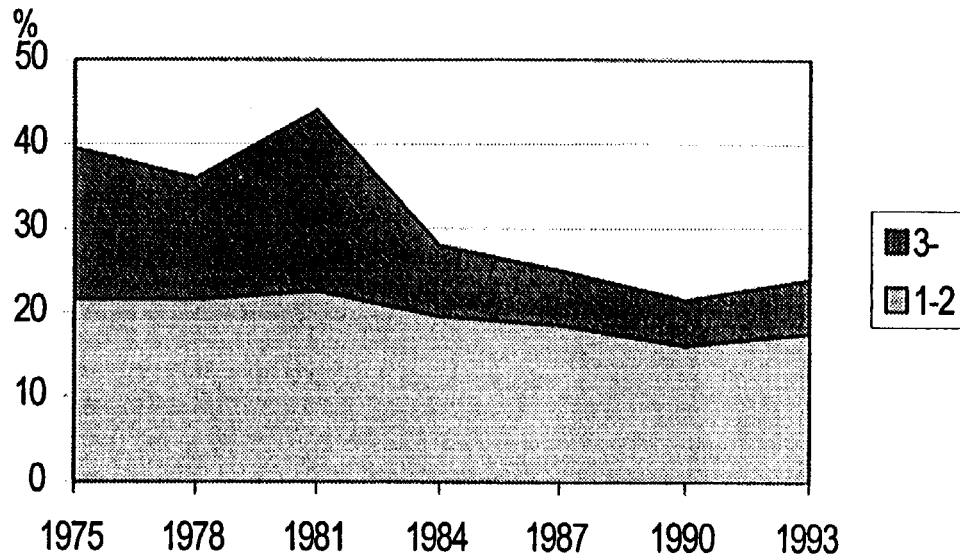
SURVEY DATA ON LONG-TERM CHANGES

It has been noted that police data indicate as much about police activity as they do about drug dealing and thus they must be interpreted with caution. However, there are independent indicators supporting the view that there is a preventive effect.

In Stockholm, every third year since 1975, all pupils in 9th grade (14 to 15 year olds) are asked about their experience of drugs (for sources, see appendix). Figure 5 shows that in 1981 the proportion who had been offered cannabis for sale peaked at 44%; by 1987 the figure had fallen to 25%. The decline was most marked among those who had been offered drugs three or more times: from 22% in 1981 to 7% in 1987. A similar trend is shown for the use of cannabis in

Figure 6. The proportion using fell from above 20% in 1981 to less than 10% in 1993.

Figure 5: Percentage of 9th Grade Pupils Who Have Been Offered Cannabis or Other Drugs for Sale, by Frequency of Offer, Stockholm, 1975-1993

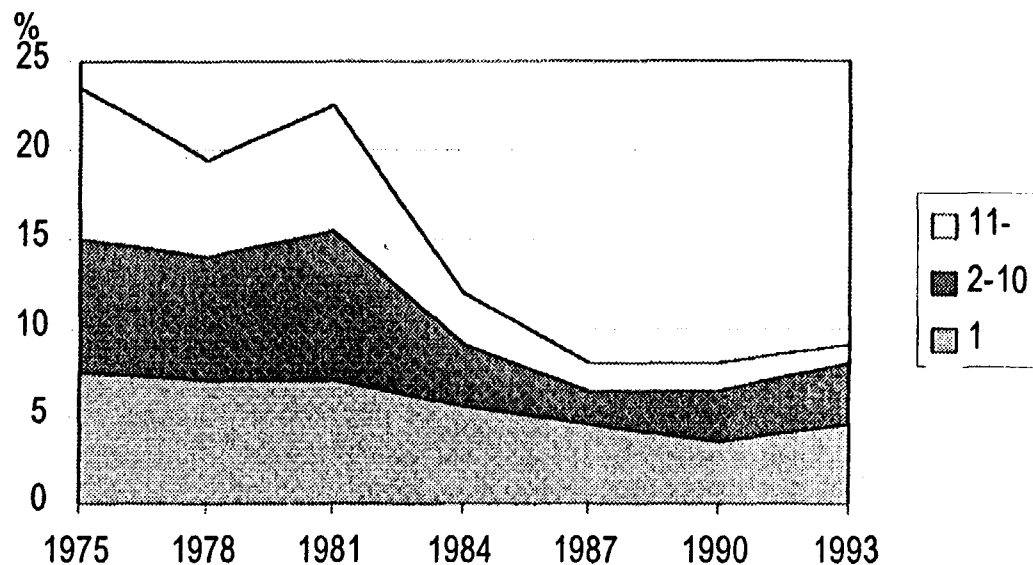


It is evident from Figure 6 that the decline is most apparent among frequent users. Of those who have used cannabis more than ten times, the proportion has decreased from 9% in 1981 to 2% in 1987. Thus, both exposure to and use of drugs among 9th graders in Stockholm have dramatically diminished after the onset of the policy.

Since the end of the 1960s, conscripts have been surveyed about their drug experience. (In Sweden military service is compulsory, and most people are 18 years old when they are conscripted.) The most commonly used drug is cannabis, and most of these users report first use in the year of enlistment or in the preceding year. The proportion of conscripts in the County of Stockholm with experience of drugs grew from about 20% in 1967 to a little less than 40% percent in 1973. After a decrease to 30% in 1976, there was a further increase to just below 40% in 1980. From that year on, there was a continual and very steep decline to about 14% in the mid-1980s. In 1992, the figure was just above 10% (Guttormsson, 1998).

If fewer young persons are exposed to drugs, it could mean that the basis for recruitment into careers as habitual drug misusers has diminished (Olsson, 1995). Two surveys investigating the prevalence of drug use have been conducted in the County of Stockholm; in each case the police and different authorities and organizations in the health- and social-care sectors were asked to give information about drug users known to them. The purpose of the surveys, carried out in 1979 and 1992, was to estimate number of drug addicts with heavy drug use. The results are shown in Table 3. Heavy use is defined as at least weekly use and/or injecting use.

Figure 6: Percentage of Pupils in 9th Grade Using Cannabis, By Frequency of Use, Stockholm, 1975-1993



There is an increase in prevalence. However, this is not an unexpected finding since the drug epidemic is a fairly recent phenomenon. More interesting is the increase in age. This will occur if those who entered their drug careers earlier continue with their habit, in combination with a slowing down of new recruitment. That this is the case is indicated by the estimated lower value on incidence during the second nine-year period, which on the whole, entails the period when the new policy was introduced.

DEVELOPMENT

During the last few years a worrying development has taken place. Both in school- and conscript-surveys covering the whole country, far more young persons admit to having tried drugs, mainly cannabis. The levels are, however, much lower than in the beginning of the 70s (Guttormsson et al., 1999).

As yet, there is no firm information about the background to this development, except that it seems to be part of an international trend. Similar increases have also occurred in other countries. But Sweden differs in one important aspect. In an international survey conducted in 1995 comparing experience of drug use among juveniles in several countries, Sweden had conspicuous, lower levels than most other countries (Hibell et al., 1997). For example, the proportion who had used cannabis during the last 30 days was 1% in Sweden compared to 24% in the U.K. and 16% in the U.S. An interesting question is the extent to which the low Swedish level can be attributed to the proactive drugs policy. Comparisons between countries, and even cities, with different policies could be one way to get further information on this.

Table 3: Estimated Prevalence of Heavy Drug Misusers in the County of Stockholm, Age and Estimated Incidence (9th Grade) in 1979 and 1992

	1979	1992
Prevalence	3,424	4,727
Age		
Mean	28.6	34.3
Median	27	34
Incidence (9 years)	2,600	2,000

Source: Table 1, Kühlnhorn et al., 1998:103.

DISCUSSION

In a situation like this, with a natural experiment occurring over a period of three decades, it is extremely difficult to isolate the impact of criminal policy measures and to assess their relative importance. Other factors have, of course, also been influential.

Over the last few decades Sweden has been transformed to a more open society where international influences have become far more salient. Partly it is a consequence of direct contacts in trade, tourism and immigration, etc., but also indirectly through cultural influences. These factors tend to increase the problem. New drugs have also been introduced, some of which have been aimed at younger persons.

The younger generations have, in contrast to the older ones, had the opportunity to witness the consequences of sustained drug misuse. The experiences of drug addicts are usually not very tempting, which could make it easier to abstain from drug use. The preventive efforts of schools and the social-care system must also be considered.

It is apparent that the liberal Swedish ideology about drugs dating from the 1970s developed into a far more restrictive one in the 1980s. Especially for juveniles, this change is probably an important factor. However, in the last few years, there seems to have been a shift towards a more permissive attitude again.

Still, there has been a marked turnaround in policy and police practice since the 1970s. The data presented here are consistent with the view that the new, tougher policies had preventive effects. It is impossible to make more far-reaching conclusions, but on the present evidence it would be unreasonable to accuse our politicians, who are ultimately responsible for the policies, of making unwise decisions.



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APPENDIX - SOURCES FOR THE SCHOOL SURVEYS

- 1975-84:** Fridenaš, R.; L. Hejdenberg and G. Olsson. 1984-års ANT-vaneundersökning i Stockholms skolor. Stockholms skolförvaltning Elewårdsbyrå. ANT-informationen.
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- 1993:** Qvarnström, G. Drogvanor och våldserfarenheter bland åk 9 elever i Stockholms skolor 1993. Stockholms Skolor. Central Förvaltning 1994:1.

NOTES

1. The knock-on effect meant that it had an increasing effect on the efforts by the police.